Exploring the Efficacy of Video Project Assignments in English Language Learning through the Lens of Tertiary-Level EFL Students**

İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak Öğrenen Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Gözünden Dil Öğreniminde Video Proje Ödevlerinin Etkiliğini Araştırma

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Abstract

Convenient methods for the instruction of foreign languages are constantly in quest as a consequence of incessant technological breakthroughs at a rapid speed. Video-making project has turned out to be a prominent technique that allows learners to be actively involved in the target language and utilize L2 in real-world situations with "intake" they obtained from in-class setting. English language students' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of these multimodal resources in their learning experience as non-examination assessment tools have not, however, been the objective of many studies within online EFL contexts. Hence, this study was directed at seeking the relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of the efficacy of group project assignments on their L2 competence, language learning process, and implementations in online classes. To that end, 75 sophomore Turkish students in tertiary-level education enrolled in a compulsory online module of English partook in the research by filling out a 17-item questionnaire. The results portray the positive relations between their perceptions towards the influences of those projects on language proficiency and target language learning phases, whereas a significant relationship was not detected between their implementations in online settings and contributions to the L2 learning process. Nevertheless, the optimistic approach of EFL students to exploit these projects as effective tools for English proficiency mediated the link between these two foregoing sub-dimensions. Accordingly, some suggestions were provided for future research directions.

Keywords: EFL, Student-generated video-project assignment, Video-based assignment, Video-making, Video-project assignment (VPA)

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Öz

Hızla devam eden teknolojik gelişmelerin bir sonucu olarak, yabancı dil öğretimi için uygun yöntemler sürekli olarak aranmaktadır. Video yapımı projesi, öğrencilerin hedef dile aktif olarak katılmalarını ve sınıf ortamından elde ettikleri "alım" ile dili gerçek dünya durumlarında kullanmalarını sağlayan önemli bir teknik haline gelmiştir. Ancak, İngilizce öğrenenlerin dil öğrenimlerinde, sınav dışı değerlendirme araçları olarak bu çok modlu kaynakların etkililiğine ilişkin algıları, çevrimiçi yabancı dil öğretimi bağlamındaki çoğu çalışmanın amaçları arasında yer almamaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenenlerin grup proje ödevlerinin ikinci dil yeterlilikleri, dil öğrenme süreçleri ve çevrimiçi sınıflardaki uygulamaları üzerindeki etkililiğine ilişkin algıları arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaya yöneliktir. Bu amaçla, zorunlu çevrimiçi İngilizce dersine kayıtlı yükseköğretim düzeyindeki 75 Türk ikinci sınıf öğrencisi, 17 soruluk bir anketi doldurarak araştırmaya katılmıştır. Sonuçlar, bu projelerin dil yeterliliği ve hedef dil öğrenme süreçleri üzerindeki etkilerine yönelik algıları arasındaki olumlu ilişkileri gösterirken, çevrimiçi ortamlardaki uygulamaları ile ikinci dil öğrenme sürecine katkıları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki tespit edilememiştir. Bununla birlikte, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin bu projeleri dil becerileri için etkili araçlar olarak kullanma konusundaki olumlu yaklaşımı, bu iki alt boyut arasındaki bağlantıya aracılık etmiştir. Buna göre, gelecekteki araştırmalar için bazı öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, Öğrencilerin ürettiği video proje ödevleri, Video tabanlı ödevler, Video yapımı, Video-proje ödevleri (VPÖ)

Introduction

As Parker (2020) states, foreign language education in the present-day is in a state of flux. She also stresses that conventional teaching techniques, such as rote memorization of grammar rules and lexical patterns or assessment and evaluation based on pen and paper which were counted as powerful in leading learners to ease of expressions in L2, pertain to long gone days. Modern language classes cannot accommodate such archaic methods given the boosting number of courses and students, and comprehensive schedules in all educational contexts. Consequently, nowadays foreign language learners in the early stages of their learning experiences are mostly deprived of individualized attention than in the yesteryears to further their language acquisition. Moreover, their learning quality and involvement in the learning process at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic have deteriorated owing to its catastrophic impact on language education. To curb the worries concerning learning loss in foreign languages, multimodality has gained momentum with the rapid progress of digital technologies. This inter-disciplinary approach relayed (mostly) textual literacy to multiple modalities and literacies by paving the path for incorporating a variety of multimodal interfaces in education in the new-normal era (Yeh et al., 2021). Predicated on this theoretical framework, sights, music, sounds, and other communicative and sensory modes have coalesced within a holistic ideology so that language learners can practice intertwining distinct multimode opportunities without restricting the language skills solely to one (Dressman, 2019).

In the era global, various studies have been carried out in English as a Foreign Language (hereinafter "EFL") education to make learners drawn in utilizing multimodal forms so that they could produce knowledge in accordance with the paradigm shift (Jorm et al., 2019). As one of these multimedia technologies serving different communicative resources so that learners can transmit abstract content concretely via multi-faceted presentations, video projects were employed in some of these studies to help learners gain technological mastery. However, as Namin et al. (2021) and Parker (2020) emphasized, there is still more research required, particularly in the Turkish context, to explore the impact of video projects on learners' success, understanding, and attitudes towards their significance in language studies. Likewise, they also call for studies lacking within the research paradigm that direct at enlightening implementations of these projects through which learners can move across aural, textual, or visual modes in EFL courses, and their perception of these practices. This is because a majority of research in the existing literature addressed their interrelationship with vocabulary, speaking, and writing skills along with unearthing their influences on engagement, motivation, confidence, public speaking, anxiety, or stress. That being the case, the current study has been designed on student-generated video project assignment (VPA) as a form of multimodality. It was set out to reveal students' perceptions of its efficiency in L2 skills, its contributions to their learning experiences, and thoughts about its practices in EFL lessons during online education. More importantly, relations between these perceptions were analysed to reveal how they mutually vary and how reflections of their liaisons could potentially affect EFL education. Hence, from these perspectives, the present study is original and is hoped to come to the forefront within the literature.

Literature Review

Some theoretical underpinnings subsist in navigating the undertaken research. It was structured around the foregoing model of multimodality, and instructional practices were dictated by Parker's (2020) andragogy model to some extent. However, project-based learning (PBL) appeared as the overarching theoretical framework of this study.

PBL: It is grounded in 20th-century progressive education and constructivist pedagogy in theory given it highly regards active learning experience in a community besides seizing the principle of student-directed learning (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016). To put it another way, PBL lives on dialogic and more of a Socratic approach to language education. PBL also instigates learners to gain skills and knowledge by going through a painstaking investigation process based on the design of the gathered and compiled products, and authentic questions (Park & Hiver, 2017). Thereafter, they are supposed to explore, confer, comment, and construct the project as a group to report solutions as self-sufficient workers and principal actors of their learning. Through these negotiations and the exchange of knowledge in a friendly manner, they are driven to enhance both critical and higher-order thinking skills with in-depth analyses and syntheses (Shin, 2018). Hence, they are ideally expected to alter attitudes, understandings, conceptions, and finally behaviours towards language and knowledge at the end of the activities and the project. These all represent the core idea of Parker's (2020) model of teaching to adults in that their learning is based upon what they bring to class at first. This scholar explicates that prior knowledge of adults about educational activities shapes their manners, perceptions, and identities to what to learn. As previous learning experiences and knowledge vary from one student to another, they learn best within group activities, problem-solving tasks, simulations, and project assignments, which cannot be achieved with a textbook but needs to be activated by experiences. Taken together, the focal point of PBL in essence is more on the things students accomplished by performing the project than the project itself.

Similar to the aforementioned studies, the literature illustrates that great strides have been made as contributions of PBL in foreign language education. As a case in point, Simpson (2011) reported the characteristics of PBL regarding its benefits to language learners as espousing digital and authentic sources, creating an arena to activate and advance social and management skills, stimulating peer feedback through comments, thus working in a cooperative manner than a competitive one, and conducting comprehensive assessment from the first steps to the last performance stage of the project. In the words of Parker (2020), they learn not only the notions of self and others but also the value of connection in a social entourage with others. This empowers their learning by transgressing the understanding that the instructor is the end-all be-all of learning and the only knowledge constructer. By the same token, Miller et al. (2012) underlined its importance in language classes in terms of coordinating the use of diverse skills, pushing students to liability for their own learning, and associating their learning encounters with previous experiences in and outside of the study hall. Additionally, Shih and Tsai (2017) referred to learner autonomy, cognitive and self-control skills, and intellectual development as vital contributions of PBL to L2 learning. Likewise, Nanni and Pusey (2020) dwelled on the extent to which language learners increased their digital literacy as a 21st-century skill through the implementation of a project with their peers. As is seen, a lot of enactments of PBL have already been reported in academia, yet only a limited number of scholars have specified their research on just one form of it in a virtual EFL learning setting. Therefore, the following section will focus on VPA in online platforms considering the scarcity of empirical evidence in the previous literature, which also emerged as the basic motive underlying this study.

VPAs in EFL Learning: Up to now, various researchers have championed video projects, originally depicted as a form of multimodality and PBL, upgrading the language competence of learners (e.g., de Koff, 2021; Taylor et al., 2011; Zacharis, 2010). Their appreciation was founded on the premise that different from video-watching, VPAs can turn the learning process into a meaningful practice. Hence, they would provide learners with the chance of using English liter-

ally to discover and leverage their learning strategies. Furthermore, Dahya (2017) clarified that those practices guide learners to contemplate and reconcile with others and team up to integrate knowledge, and technology into their artefacts. Having reached similar findings, Yeh et al. (2021) interpreted that video projects in fact hearten students to come to be self-regulated while striving to promote their language use, fluency, and vocabulary to accomplish high-quality videos, appreciating the prominence of "learning by doing". In addition, Souzandehfar et al. (2014) stressed video projects support learners to discover how L2 can be referred to within distinct situations while planning the dialogues to overlap with the scenarios in videos. Meyer and Forester (2015) also addressed their use of realistic colloquial language to create authentic video scenarios instead of formal English in the project. In a like manner, Boey et al. (2023) added that these student-produced projects in the online mode would help cultivate transferable soft skills of university students and increase intrinsic motivation for life-long learning. Finally, de Koff (2021) shared that nearly all students in tertiary education partaking in the research self-identified the advance in their learning from video productions in a post-Covid-19 setting.

Namin et al. (2021) noted that VPAs can be remarkably compatible with online language teaching platforms and align with the learning styles and interests of young adults at universities. Congruent with them, Mohamed et al. (2021) declared students' positive perceptions towards the use of VPAs in speaking lessons aside from boosting learner grades, and engagement in the course. Similarly, Aksel and Gürman-Kahraman (2014) determined the optimistic perceptions of university students towards incorporating VPAs into lessons given their effectiveness in English language studies. Moreover, Arsenis et al. (2022) detected perceived benefits of VPAs to learners' affective skills owing to being engaging yet challenging experiences as well which trigger them to cooperate and elevate language proficiency. In the same vein, Ting (2013) reported the advantages of video assessment through the eyes of learners and concluded that these video projects could spur their creativity via multimodal technology, target language use, and collaborative learning style. VPAs also improved their self-esteem volunteering them to communicate in English. Nevertheless, as cited in Arsenis et al. (2022), Jorm et al. (2019) claimed that "Despite the increasing use of videos and capture-content by university academics to enhance students' learning experience, video-based student assessment in higher education remains limited" (p. 2). In addition, Parker (2020) underscored still little is known about online PBL and VPAs in language education whereas most evolve from medicine, veterinary, or health care despite their novel use in higher education context. Finally, the issue of learners' perceptions towards VPAs seems to be restricted to language proficiency, reflections on grades, future projects, technology use, and various learner traits. However, studies exploring further dimensions of learner perceptions regarding VPAs are needed in language teaching and learning especially in the Turkish context due to much less research. Considering these acknowledged limitations in the field, the study has been orchestrated to fill this gap under the guidance of these research questions:

1. Are EFL students' perceptions of the efficacy of VPA in foreign language skills and of its contribution to the language learning process positively related?

2. Are EFL students' perceptions of the effectiveness of VPA in target language proficiency positively related to their perceptions of its implementation in online classes?

3. Are EFL students' perceptions of the contribution of VPA to the language learning process positively related to their perceptions of its implementation in online classes?

4. Do perceptions of VPA's effectiveness on target language competence mediate the relationship between the perceptions towards its practices in e-classes and contributions to the learning process?

Method

Participants and Setting: 47 female and 28 male sophomore students enrolled in a state higher education institution who were taking a compulsory general English course incorporated into this research through total population sampling. These 75 students were at the pre-intermediate level based on the foreign language unit's examination. Prior to the course, they did not have experience in preparing video projects in groups during the online education system.

Research Design: As the researcher, also the instructor of the course had already lectured these EFL learners in the former term, s/he identified their immediate needs based on his/her 14-week observations. In general, they were determined to be hesitant with taking the floor, passive, apathetic to the course, and unsettled with pair work. Thus, s/he planned some extracurricular experiential and discovery-based activities, team projects, and performative tasks to be executed in that semester. Another motive behind this attempt was Taylor et al.'s (2011) recommendation of a shift in language teaching from value delivery to value co-creation to leverage learner engagement in a social context. Then, as a midterm project, the instructor organized a role-play to be conducted in class on any topic they would feel at ease with expressing themselves as a group at the beginning of the spring semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. However, with the earthquake on February 16 and its seismic impact on the whole country, all educational contexts country-wide shifted from face-to-face instruction to online learning. While redesigning the schedule and examinations accordingly, the researcher remembered the caveat by Perez (2010) in that recognizing learners' perceptions would provide them with regarding why they were to partake in such kinds of activities, and projects, and hence they could view them as mediators for mastering English skills. Moreover, the advice of Zacharis (2010) was highly considered who emphasized quality can be achieved not only through digitized learning outcomes but also through a broader, more holistic experience in which students' perceptions and responses to learning situations are essential. Finally, the instructor kept in mind the key role of innovative assessment for authentic learning rather than the assessment of learning (Parker, 2020). Accordingly, s/he required these netizens to prepare group video projects to be regarded as their midterm exam after the approval of the university's ethics review board. They were to pick one of the following ten topics created by the instructor about contemporary and social issues in the second week of the term, preceding filling out a questionnaire eliciting their perceptions:

1. Work on how to design and run a place to look after local, homeless people.

2. Write short scripts for a documentary/movie with a social moral and introduce it.

3. Identify a school library in a disadvantaged area and discuss how to promote students to study by improving the facilities.

4. Design an alarming system to stop the spread of Corona virus or any other global crises.

5. Offer a new school system to increase collaboration and achievement among all parties (teachers, students, parents, etc.).

6. Project a new public transport system to resolve traffic congestion in the city.

7. Offer an innovation to the education system for the improvement of students' cognitive skills.

8. Organize an educational school party in which students can enhance their English skills.

9. Arrange a small-scale workshop on academic uses of social media technology at the undergraduate level.

10. Research the role of public relations in the welfare of the country and propose a model for the practice of community service.

Initially, the instructor introduced some multimodal learning resources to students, such as video-making tools. Thereafter, they gathered information about multimodal items and their use in the assignments. Then, the course-takers were assigned to prepare almost 30-minute VPAs in groups of seven to eight. After conducting meetings on online platforms (e.g., Zoom, or Teams, to name a few), they were supposed to introduce the role distribution among members, and a brief and overall description of their plans five weeks before the deadline. Two weeks later, they were to determine all details of the project in addition to their roles, and contributions to the assignment by co-writing the scripts in Google Docs to receive feedback. Lastly, they were expected to hand in their revised VPAs in light of the instructor's feedback with the "wetransfer" cloud-based file-sharing tool a week before the deadline for final approval. In this way, they would be stimulated to attempt lots of "takes" pursued by edits, reviews, and feedback dissimilar to "live" presentations in class in which they were allowed to perform only once. In addition, group members would be granted the opportunity for subsequent amendments based on joint reflections of their recorded content before the submission through critiques, and strategy formulations without external judgment or risks.

In total, the assignments were completed in seven weeks and their submission of projects was in the eighth week of the term. The following week was allocated to class discussions and peer feedback sessions after listening to each group's reports of VPAs to improve the potential deficiencies of projects and conduct some refinement. Throughout the assignment, students were free to select what platforms or applications to record their performances due to potential problems they may experience, such as quotas, or insufficient Internet bandwidth. Consequently, the workaround for students in the earthquake zone was creation of the video projects with "app smashing" by integrating educational tools (e.g., Edpuzzle, Canva, Nearpod, or Flipgrid) to advance their capacity and benefits, whereas some only referred to one well-known portal or platform (e.g., Screencastify, Blackboard Collaborate, or YouTube).
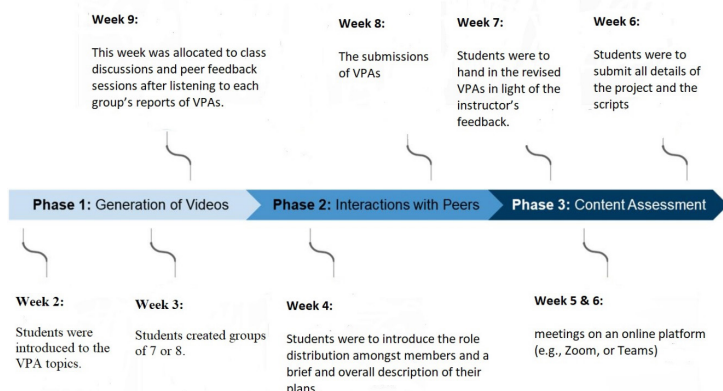

Figure 1. Timeline for the project

As their weight on the grade point average (GPA) was 30%, each group member actively took part in the projects. However, the module's assessment strategy was grounded in both group and individual performances with equal percentages. The former assessment was announced to be according to the originality of the projects, the phase of preparation, integration of audio-visuals or any other supplementary items, task achievement, timing, and participation. The latter depended on the criteria of intelligibility, language use, vocabulary, creativity, and fluency of the participants. Finally, their grades were assessed accordingly and announced by the instructor in the week following their performances.

Data Collection: Having completed the presentations and discussions of VPAs as part of the non-examination assessment, the students were directly posed to fill in a questionnaire developed by Aksel and Gürman-Kahraman (2014) to elicit their overall perceptions of VPAs in that quantitative study. It comprised 17 items within three different domains (sub-dimensions) based on a five point likert-scale varying from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In the first section (N=6), learners' perceived effectiveness of VPAs on L2 proficiency skills was investigated with the statements about daily language use, and future English practices besides the macro skills and sub-skills. The second part (N=7) was all about EFL students' perceptions towards the contributions of this coursework on the language learning process, which was scrutinized through the expressions on creativity, technology use, motivation, authentic learning, self-reflection, cooperation, and self-confidence. Lastly, the third part (N=4) scrutinized their thoughts concerning the implementation of VPAs in e-classes with the items concerning details about preparation and weight on the assessment process.

Data Analysis: Data gathered from this instrument was analysed with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26 through descriptive analysis and the relational model which identifies whether two or more variables change together and if so how it happens (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the first sub-dimension (part) of the scale about the perceptions towards development in the target language was .82, whereas it was .80 for the second which covers the perceptions of VPAs' contributions to language learning. The last part's Cronbach's alpha value was calculated as .60 which addresses the participants' practices of VPAs. Finally, as Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole scale was .87, it can be stated that the scale was a reliable tool in this research sample. Moreover, before the analysis, some criteria, such as missing values, outliers and skewness, and kurtosis values to check the normal distribution were investigated; only then parametric tests were used.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	$\bar{X}$	1	2	3	SC	KC
1st sub-dimension	13,96±6,89	-	,665*	,380*	,894	-,063
2nd sub-dimension	16,69±7,61	-	-	,331*	,819	-,199
3rd sub-dimension	10,58±4,13	-	-	-	,700	-,185

Note. SC = Skewness Coefficients, KC = Kurtosis Coefficients. *$p <$ .05

As mediation analysis in the bootstrapping method is based on the least squares regression analysis, multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) value, confidence interval (CI) value, binary correlations of explanatory variables, tolerance value, case indexes, and finally binary correlations of independent variables were examined before proceeding to the analysis (Hayes,
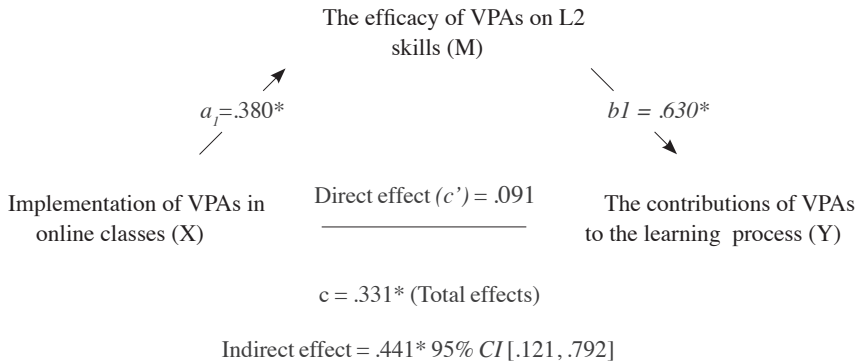
2018). Accordingly, the data set was found to be appropriate for the mediated analyses with the bootstrapping method. Lastly, the results indicate that the created model (Figure 2 below) was significant and the independent variables together can explain 45% of the variance in the perceptions of VPAs [F(2;72) = 29,452; p< .05, R^2 = .4500].

Results and Discussion

To begin with the first research question, Table 1 displays that learners' perceptions towards adopting VPAs in foreign language skills and their contribution to the language learning process were positively related (p< .05). That is, students would perceive their exploitation as effective for L2 skills if they had optimistic perceptions about the contribution of VPAs to language learning. Similarly, the model in Figure 2 significantly predicts the variable of perceptions towards handling VPAs for target language skills and perceptions of the role of VPA throughout English language learning (path $b1$) in a positive way (ß = .630, t = 6.67, p< .05). Hence, this finding overlaps with the study by Park and Hiver (2017), and Simpson (2011) in the light of their confirmation that from the very beginning to the end point of the projects, learners perceived undertaking the leadership roles and self-assurance thanks to leveraging their L2 skills with these authentic, web-based resources. By the same token, as Dahya (2017) presented, this result would explicitly be associated with the perceived enhancement in L2 competence with technology use and collaboration with peers, which can potentially push them to become self-directed learners via VPAs (see Petersen & Nassaji, 2016; Shih & Tsai, 2017, for a review). This result also accords with Aksel and Gürman-Kahraman (2014) who showed to what extent optimistic approaches of EFL students would matter to both their attainments from the courses and the functioning of VPAs as a medium of learning in an EFL context. In spite of not reporting a completely parallel conclusion, Souzandehfar et al. (2014) who unearthed that EFL learners' skills would progress with distinct types of dialogues based on the scripts to be created for VPAs would bolster this research from this aspect. Besides, this inference was in concert with Meyer and Forester (2015) who had already drawn the attention of the scholars pointing out that the attitudes of EFL students reshaped the further phases of the module. Furthermore, video projects promoted conversational language unlike the formal writing genre, and thus incited them to communicate more throughout the lectures. Finally, the researcher concurred with Miller et al. (2012) and Ting (2013) in that learner-generated video projects bridge over L2 mastery and they were a practical way to unite real-life settings outside of the class and language learning process. Their finding was as if foreshadowing VPAs' positive potential impact on online learning from then on.

Referring to the second research question, when other pathways in the model were examined, the variable of perceptions towards applying these multimodal items in online courses significantly and positively predict perceptions (path a_1) of the effectiveness of VPAs on target language skills [ß = .380, t = 3.51, p< .05]. Similarly, Table 1 reads that the perceptions regarding their implementation in e-classes and use to burgeon learning skills were positively related (p< .05). In other words, provided that students had an optimistic attitude towards the practices of VPAs in a digital platform, they would adopt a positive mindset with respect to the target language proficiency. This directly indicates Namin et al.'s (2021) detection in that they would reap the benefit of VPAs since these technological designs were "unlike mere video consumption, the process of video production" (p. 5). This finding would also chime in with Mohamed et al. (2021) who significantly correlated the optimistic perceptions of participating EFL learners pertaining to VPAs

with their productive skills and grades in virtual language classes at the peak of the pandemic. Additionally, this issue appeared to be on the same lines with Parker (2020) in terms of dwelling on the perceived effect of learners on VPAs' reinforcement of target skills, and young adults' interests in the theme. Moreover, it was also in tune with de Koff (2021) since EFL students who engaged in preparing similar video projects in a digital platform fostered their proficiency in turn. As a final point, he insinuated their self-identified learning would bring along other video productions in the forthcoming online education period or blended learning.

The efficacy of VPAs on L2 skills (M)

$a_1 = .380*$

$b1 = .630*$

Implementation of VPAs in online classes (X)

Direct effect $(c') = .091$

The contributions of VPAs to the learning process (Y)

$c = .331*$ (Total effects)

Indirect effect $= .441*$ 95% CI [.121, .792]

Note. *p < .05; Standardized beta coefficients (b); n = 75, Bootstrapping 5000.

Figure 2. The mediating role of the first sub-dimension in the relationship between the second and third sub-dimensions

As for the third research question, it was detected that when the mediating variable (first sub-dimension, "M") was not incorporated into the model, the effect of perceptions about in-class practices on the perceptions of VPAs' contribution to language learning (direct effect, c' path) was statistically insignificant [ß = 0.091, t = .97, p =. 335]. The disunity between the two items exhibited a contrast with Arsenis et al. (2022) whose study unearthed the raised awareness and consciousness of EFL learners and mastering the use of technology to do more projects despite the hardship while producing the videos in the given themes. Another different conclusion was arrived at by Yeh et al. (2021) who reported the influence of VPA preparation on EFL learners as emotional self-regulation. This finding was also contradictory to Shin (2018) due to learners' perceived increase in creativity and critical thinking skills after their extensive analyses of the topic which was determined regarding their needs. It was also discovered to be discrepant from Nanni and Pusey (2020) who portrayed students' sense of advancement in digital literacy skills owing to "learning by doing" as an authentic learning experience with more projects in number in the online education context. Finally, in terms of affective values, Boey et al. (2023) displayed discord with this result since they accounted for learner motivation, and soft skills with the themes they enjoyed being immersed in. In fact, these scholars' conclusion evidently demonstrates why we cannot see the direct effect of participant students' perceptions of VPAs' implementations on their contributions to learning considering their lack of motivation, self-confidence, and problems in the preparation process as a result of the earthquake.

Last of all, when mediator variable (M) was included in the model, the total effect (path c) of perceptions concerning the practices of VPAs in online courses on perceptions of their contribu-

tions to the learning process was significant (ß = .331, t = 3.00, p< .05). Apart from this, confidence intervals for the indirect effect were also examined to determine whether the perceptions regarding the efficacy of VPAs on target language skills play a mediating role in order to answer the fourth research question. As these values cover zero, it can be stated that the perceptions about the effectiveness of VPAs in the target language mediated (B = .441, CI [.070, .398]) the relationship between the two sub-dimensions (see Figure 2). In other saying, the implementation of VPAs in virtual settings and the perceived contributions of these non-examination assessments to the whole learning process were not considered to interact. However, the fine line for learners was the sense of discerning their benefits to the competency in the target language and to the process of meaning creation within a social entourage. Having said that, perceptions towards the impact of VPAs on language proficiency would in fact play a pivotal key role in cultivating their general English language learning performance. This mediation reminds us of the basic motive behind attempting to learn a foreign language. That is, all programs should strive to predicate education for communicative purposes with an instrumentalist approach and also lead learners to interact with people belonging to diverse backgrounds by holding a constitutive perspective (Parker, 2020). This would make language studies more meaningful from the eyes of learners given the steps they would go through to activate the language skills in the light of the former approach and the soft skills they were to leverage while designing and presenting VPAs in digital classes in consideration of the latter. Taken all together, the overall optimistic attitudes towards utilizing VPA led us to consider it as a *sine qua non* teaching and learning technique of PBL in EFL online classes in parallel with the results by Boey et al. (2023), Namin et al. (2021), and Yeh et al. (2021).

Conclusion

Positive relations between EFL learners' perceptions towards the effectiveness of VPAs on English language proficiency and the learning process, and their implementations in e-classes were reported at the end of this analysis. Moreover, learners' understanding of VPAs' importance on the growth of L2 skills was detected to play a mediating role between their efficacies on the whole learning experience and adoption as a non-examination assessment tool in virtual educational settings. The results illustrate that EFL learners tend to use VPAs as a form of multimodal technology in online learning systems. This is because they grant more opportunities to conceptualize and visualize the target subject in multiple ways through macro skills within groups by embracing technological applications. Thus, VPAs here would stand for an innovative mode of assessment for active and authentic learning, thereby nurturing multimedia skills, and providing learners with taking ownership of their learning if they regarded VPAs' impact on language competence. Based on this conclusion, the implication of the study would be to exploit student-generated VPAs as a contemporary assessment modality to guide EFL learners to explore the motivations and in parallel reconceptualise what it means to learn English. Besides, an alternative suggestion for classroom implication would be VPAs through interview records, a wide range of mobile or computer applications, or chalkboard animations on a topic identified by the course instructor according to the general needs of learners. In this way, VPAs will serve the purpose of reaching out to EFL students with diverse interests, inclinations, language learning backgrounds, and self-efficacy beliefs and possibly enhance their course achievement, in turn. Accordingly, teacher would act as an intellectual mentor empowering their learning in a dynamic setting and leveraging reflections throughout the digital language education in this millennial era.

As for the limitations of the study, it was conducted in a local university in Turkey, yet a similar attempt can be initiated among English learners from diverse cultures, which can contribute to the cross-cultural validation of the results. Similarly, the efficacy of VPAs could be investigated with an increased number of learners or a different population in distinct regions by adopting the same questionnaire for a robustness check of this study. It would be particularly invaluable when designed among language learners from disadvantaged or rural areas owing to the limitation of reaching multimedia access. Even though this work constituted an attempt in terms of illustrating the cases of EFL students who experienced a local crisis while struggling to cope with its devastating consequences, and tried to maintain their education in the meantime, the field requires more studies. By the same token, an experimental design was not planned for the present study considering the mental and emotional baggage this disaster left on the population. Future research might conduct an experiment to search for the distinctions in perceptions and language proficiency between the learners engaged in VPAs and the control group. Finally, another essential extension of this study would be planning a research design in need of qualitative data, such as observations, reflection journals, reflections as blog or video blog (vlogs) entries, or written reports. Such an endeavour might support bridging the gap between the numerical values and the discursive attributes generating further insights into the practices of VPAs.

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